

Appl. No. : 09/662,454
Filed : September 14, 2000

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 42, 45, 48, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, and 57 without prejudice, and add Claims 58-66 as follows:

1-57 (Canceled)

58. (New) A composition comprising a purified and isolated nucleic acid molecule, which encodes human hepatitis C virus (HCV),

wherein expression of said molecule in transfected cells results in production of virus when transfected into cells,

wherein said molecule encodes the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3.

59. (New) The composition of claim 58, wherein said molecule comprises the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

60. (New) A composition comprising a purified and isolated nucleic acid molecule, which encodes a chimeric human hepatitis C virus (HCV),

wherein expression of said molecule in transfected cells results in production of virus when transfected into cells,

wherein said molecule is producible by the process comprising, with reference to the nucleic acid sequence encoding the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3,

replacing a portion of said nucleic acid sequence that encodes the structural region of hepatitis C virus with the structural region from the genome of another strain of hepatitis C virus from a different genotype or subtype, to produce said molecule.

61. (New) A composition comprising a purified and isolated nucleic acid molecule, which encodes a chimeric human hepatitis C virus (HCV),

wherein expression of said molecule in transfected cells results in production of virus when transfected into cells,

wherein said molecule is producible by the process comprising, with reference to the nucleic acid sequence encoding the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3,

replacing a portion of said nucleic acid sequence that encodes at least one HCV protein with a portion that encodes the corresponding HCV protein from the genome of another strain of hepatitis C virus from a different genotype or subtype, to produce said molecule.

62. (New) The composition of claim 61, wherein the HCV protein is selected from the group consisting of: NS3 protease, E1, E2 and NS4 proteins.

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63. (New) A composition comprising a purified and isolated nucleic acid molecule, which encodes a deletion mutant human hepatitis C virus (HCV),

wherein expression of said molecule in transfected cells results in production of virus when transfected into cells,

wherein said molecule is producible by the process comprising, with reference to the nucleic acid sequence encoding the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3,

deleting a portion of said nucleic acid sequence that encodes all or part of an HCV protein, to produce said molecule,

and wherein the HCV protein is selected from the group consisting of P7, NS4B and NS5A proteins.

64. (New) A method for inducing an immune response comprising the administration to an animal an effective amount of the composition of claim 58, 60, 61 or 63 to induce an immune response.

65. (New) The method according to claim 64, wherein the composition is provided to an animal not infected with a hepatitis C virus

66. (New) The method according to claim 64, wherein the composition is provided to an animal infected with a hepatitis C virus.